

VZCZCXRO7620
PP RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHAK #2800/01 1370944
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 170944Z MAY 06 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5651
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHGA/AMCONSUL CALGARY PRIORITY 0002
RUEHHA/AMCONSUL HALIFAX PRIORITY 0003
RUEHMT/AMCONSUL MONTREAL PRIORITY 0053
RUEHQU/AMCONSUL QUEBEC PRIORITY 0001
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0015
RUEHVC/AMCONSUL VANCOUVER PRIORITY 0004

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 002800

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/17/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [CA](#) [AR](#) [FR](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: TURKEY/CANADA/France: TENSIONS OVER ARMENIAN
GENOCIDE ISSUE

REF: ANKARA 2385

ANKARA 00002800 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Political Counselor Janice G. Weiner for reasons 1.4 (b,
d).

Summary

11. (C) Turkey has reacted to Canadian PM Harper's recognition of the Armenian genocide by pulling out of a joint military exercise and officials have hinted further measures may be taken against Ottawa. At the same time, French draft legislation that would penalize denial of the genocide has come under increasingly vocal criticism here. Should the National Assembly approve the draft, officials and media sources predict a backlash in Turkey which could include large demonstrations, popular boycotts of French products, as well as disruption of diplomatic and commercial relations similar to those seen following the National Assembly's recognition of the Armenian genocide in 2001. End Summary

12. (C) MFA Undersecretary Ali Tuygan told EUR AS Dan Fried April 26 that passage of the French draft law would elicit a strong public reaction in Turkey (reftel). In early May, Turkey called its ambassadors to Canada and France back to Ankara to discuss Turkey's response to Harper's April 19 statement and pending French legislation. According to MFA Security Directorate official Nevzat Uyanik, Ambassador Koruturk returned to Paris the week of May 8, while Ambassador Erman remained a few days longer in Ankara.

Turkey/Canada -- Damage Done

13. (C) While he would not be drawn into specifics, Uyanik said relations with Canada had been "severely affected" and suggested that, in addition to withdrawing from the Maple Flag military exercise, the GOT was considering other measures against Canada which could be announced soon. He reported that PM Erdogan had sent a letter to PM Harper expressing the GOT's profound disappointment and received an "unhelpful" response from Harper. A Canadian diplomat here confirmed the downturn in relations and said Canadian officials were waiting for the next shoe to drop.

Turkey/France -- Damage Anticipated

¶4. (C) At the same time, Turkey is anxiously awaiting a possible May 18 vote in the French National Assembly on a draft law prescribing criminal penalties for denying the Armenian genocide. Uyanik told us that passage of the law would portend a serious reversal in Turkey-France relations. He compared the situation to the emotional Turkish reaction to the National Assembly's passage of a genocide resolution in 2001, which resulted in the recall of the Turkish ambassador, interruption of military-to-military ties, and sporadic boycotts of French products. French diplomats have told us France also fears a reprise of the 2001 situation. French and Turkish officials and press representatives with whom we have spoken agree that passage of the bill could easily crystallize mounting Turkish resentment over what most Turks consider an unfair and humiliating EU accession process, in which France's role has been seen as particularly problematic.

Intense Media Focus

¶5. (C) The French draft law has dominated Turkish media for the last two weeks. Commentators are predicting various degrees of Turkish popular and official reaction if and when the measure passes in the National Assembly, to include large demonstrations (small protests have already taken place near the French Embassy and Istanbul consulate), boycott of French products, a freezing of bilateral military relations, and French exclusion from official tenders. Our sources agree that the fact that National Assembly approval of the controversial draft is only the first step in a lengthy and uncertain legislative process will be lost on an embittered the Turkish public. They also agree that the Turkish

ANKARA 00002800 002.2 OF 002

government will be under huge pressure to react with, at a minimum, symbolic diplomatic and economic sanctions against France.

Comment

¶6. (C) We believe the GOT does not seek an escalation of tensions over this issue, but it is not clear the government has a game plan for controlling public resentment, and pressure to act, should the French draft be passed. Already in pre-election mode and with nationalism increasing, the GOT has little room to maneuver on this sensitive "national issue." A diplomatic row with France over this has the potential to affect negatively Turkey's EU accession process and could obstruct modest ongoing Turkey-Armenia contacts over a mechanism for normalizing bilateral relations. End Comment

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON